



***Division of Public Defender Services
State of Connecticut***

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**SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
FEBRUARY 28, 2012**

**TESTIMONY OF CHRISTINE RAPILLO
DIRECTOR OF DELINQUENCY DEFENSE AND CHILD PROTECTION
DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES**

**RAISED BILL 5217, AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO STATUTES CONCERNING THE
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports Raised Bill 5217, An Act Concerning Revisions to Statutes Concerning the Department of Children and Families. This proposal makes mostly minor and technical changes to the governing statutes of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). This Bill makes one revision that is of utmost importance to our Agency. Section 5(g)(6) would allow the Chief Public Defender or the Chief Public Defender's designee access to the records of DCF for the purpose of "ensuring competent representation by the attorneys with whom the Chief Public Defender contracts to provide legal and guardian ad litem services to the subjects of such records, and for ensuring accurate payments for services rendered by such attorneys".

The Division of Public Defender Services has been working diligently to consolidate the operations of the Commission on Child Protection into our Agency. Evaluating the quality of the legal services provided by the lawyers who represent children and families is a challenge. Furthermore, responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars requires that we be able to monitor work done, confirm that clients were assisted in an effective manner, and make payments in an accurate and timely manner. Review of DCF records is likely to be rare and would happen only in cases where a concern or complaint could not be resolved in some other way. The ability to see the DCF file will be critical to reviewing a lawyer's work on behalf of a child or parent client, as it will be a tangible record of the case activity outside the court proceedings. The Office of Chief Public Defender thanks Commissioner Katz and DCF for including this in their proposal and urges this committee to act favorably on the Bill.